

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF WEIGHTS
MEASURES AND MARKETS
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1927**

ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF WEIGHTS, MEASURES, AND MARKETS
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

FOR THE
FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1927



UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON
1927

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

DEPARTMENT OF WEIGHTS, MEASURES, AND MARKETS
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

FOR THE

YEARS 1911-1912



UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON
1912

TO THE COMMISSIONERS:

I respectfully submit the following report regarding the work of the Department of Weights, Measures, and Markets of the District of Columbia for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1927.

In this connection, I desire to express appreciation to the commissioners for their courtesy and helpfulness in connection with the performance of my duties.

GEO. M. ROBERTS,
*Superintendent, Weights,
Measures, and Markets,
District of Columbia.*

100

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF WEIGHTS, MEASURES, AND
MARKETS, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, FOR THE FISCAL
YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1927**

The duties of the Department of Weights, Measures, and Markets are set forth in the District weights and measures act of 1921. Under it the department is engaged in two distinct municipal activities—*(a)* that relating to examination and standardization of weights and measures, enforcement of provisions regarding trade practices, and requiring delivery of quantity represented of all commodities sold, and *(b)* supervision of markets owned by the District.

The two branches of the service will be discussed separately.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

The weights and measures work covers a broad field of activity. It involves duties which bring the department into close contact with practically every class of business in the District, and affects, either directly or indirectly, almost every resident thereof. It is considered desirable to review briefly the methods pursued in administration of the weights and measures law.

A large portion of the work is in the field, and is performed through the inspection force consisting of one chief inspector and six inspectors. Their duties involve inspection of all new weighing and measuring equipment before being used, and all such equipment used by business establishments, transportation companies, etc., at least semiannually thereafter, and oftener when necessary, to ascertain whether same registers accurately and whether owners of the various establishments are conducting their operations in conformity with the various regulatory provisions of the law. They also conduct, under direction of the superintendent, special investigations resulting from complaints or otherwise, general surveys relating to trade practices, gather evidence of law violations, prepare reports, and, when prosecutions are necessary, appear as witnesses and consultants in court. Each inspector makes a daily report of work performed. Special reports in writing covering investigations are also submitted to the superintendent in order that he may decide upon the action deemed necessary.

The superintendent confers daily with each inspector in regard to details of the work in which he is engaged, advises and assists him with respect to difficulties encountered, and by this and other means, keeps in close touch with the department's operations. To this policy is due in large measure the confidence reposed in the department by the public, and the spirit of loyalty, cooperation, and energy which permeates the entire personnel.

INSPECTION WORK

All weighing and measuring instruments subject to inspection and test under the law are examined before being placed in use, for the purpose of determining whether they are accurate, whether they comply with legal requirements as to construction, and are suitable for the purpose for which they are intended to be used. The work of making examinations of new types of instruments for the purpose indicated is performed largely by the chief inspector, in addition to his other duties.

After being placed in use instruments are, as nearly as is possible with the limited force, examined semiannually as required by law. This work is systematically laid out. Records are kept of all instruments inspected, showing the type, address of the owner, date of inspection, and the action taken. Records are also kept of package goods reweighed, showing whether they contained the quantity represented. A card index of all establishments using weighing and measuring instruments and the inspection records of each are serially numbered and filed for ready reference.

During the fiscal year inspectors made 11,184 official visits to business establishments under supervision, and in each instance careful inspection was made of instruments used in each. The establishments in question ranged from the smallest shops to the largest department stores and manufacturing plants. There were made 2,164 special or surprise inspections at various times throughout the year. The total number of examinations of equipment, including commercial scales, weights, capacity measures, mechanical fabric-measuring machines, linear measures, gasoline and oil dispensing pumps, prescription scales, milk bottles, and other instruments was 862,202. Of this number, 838,584 were found correct and approved, 1,477 were adjusted before being approved, and 23,618 were condemned. A large proportion of condemned measures were new milk bottles which failed to meet legal requirements.

The number of official visits to establishments shows an increase of 82 over last year. The number of special inspections shows an increase of 294. The number of prescription and jewelry scales shows an increase of 184. The number of prescription and jewelry weights shows an increase of 3,387. The number of gasoline and oil measuring pumps shows an increase of 970. The total number of office laboratory tests made during the year was 2,834, an increase of 222 over last year. They include instruments brought to the office by persons having no established place of business and certain instruments requiring a more delicate test than could be given in the field. The laboratory tests engage a large part of the time of one inspector.

Increases in inspections, however, do not give a correct indication of the actual increase in work performed. Much more attention has been given to investigational, educational, and regulatory work than ever before, and, as a result, there has been a general improvement in conditions almost all along the line.

SUMMARY OF EXAMINATIONS AND TESTS

The following statement indicates in condensed form the number of examinations and tests made of weighing and measuring equipment.

	Number exam- ined	Number found cor- rect and approved	Number approved after adjust- ment	Number con- demned
Spring scales.....	8,369	7,562	639	807
Computing scales.....	4,659	4,103	457	556
Counter scales.....	3,748	3,690	84	58
Counter platform scales.....	469	446	21	23
Platform scales.....	2,005	1,902	137	103
Dormant scales.....	192	158	15	34
Abattoir and beam scales.....	413	394	11	19
Wagon and truck scales.....	249	197	5	52
Prescription and jewelry scales and weights.....	8,369	8,199	31	170
Automatic measuring pumps.....	3,202	2,911	2	291
Capacity measures.....	34,422	28,557	-----	5,865
Milk bottles.....	768,018	752,898	-----	15,120
Avordupois weights.....	23,783	23,682	75	101
Linear measures.....	2,799	2,650	-----	149
Personal weighing scales.....	953	707	-----	246
Mechanical linear measures.....	552	528	-----	24
Total.....	862,202	838,584	1,477	23,618

CLASSIFICATION OF ESTABLISHMENTS

Following is a condensed classification of establishments and transient vendors under supervision:

Auto supplies.....	15
Bakeries.....	151
Building material and contractors.....	29
Coffee and tea.....	14
District government (including schools).....	143
Dairies and dairy products.....	62
Delicatessen and confectioneries.....	427
Druggists, wholesale and retail.....	249
Dry goods.....	210
Federal Government departments.....	27
Fish and other sea food.....	81
Flour and feed.....	23
Fruits and vegetables.....	180
Fuel and ice.....	142
Furniture and house furnishings.....	35
Garages and gasoline stations.....	430
Groceries and similar foods.....	1,923
Hardware and electrical supplies.....	170
Hospitals.....	5
Hides and fats.....	3
Ice manufacturers and cold storage.....	6
Junk.....	39
Leather and leather goods.....	8
Meats and poultry.....	332
Miscellaneous establishments.....	141
Paper, publishing, and stationery.....	31
Restaurants and hotels.....	109
Transportation and utilities.....	29
Total.....	5,014

Transient vendors:

Fuel and ice.....	568
Fruits and vegetables.....	609
Junk.....	55
Meats and poultry.....	9
Miscellaneous.....	121
Total.....	1,362

INVESTIGATIONS AND PROSECUTIONS

Every complaint received was made the basis for a careful investigation, and such action was taken as the facts in each case warranted. It was considered necessary to institute prosecutions in 111 cases during the year, which is probably the largest number instituted by any municipal weights and measures department in the United States. Defendants in none of the cases disposed of were acquitted. Eight cases were pending in court at the close of the year. Fines and forfeitures in cases disposed of amounted to \$1,008. While the weights and measures law is punitive in form, it is corrective in nature, and it has long been the policy to pursue corrective measures when abuses could be abated and the public protected by that course, but the department has not hesitated to prosecute whenever the public welfare demanded.

In addition to making investigations as a result of complaints received, inspectors, while engaged in their regular inspection duties, are required to be on the alert for discovery of law violations and to make reports to the superintendent regarding same. Inspectors also have police authority granted them by statute and make summary arrests when necessary. Special investigations are ordered in many instances when no complaint has been received, but where there is cause to believe that irregularities may exist.

Extensive surveys affecting certain lines of trade, such as bread, gasoline, coal, etc., are also made when possible. Such surveys are considered necessary in order to keep in touch with the situation. This class of work should be materially increased. Following is a condensed summary of prosecutions:

Bakers	8
Coal dealers.....	23
Gasoline dealers	14
Ice dealers.....	50
Food dealers.....	16

INFORMATION GIVEN MERCHANTS AND CONSUMERS

The policy of having inspectors devote much attention to furnishing information to merchants regarding the provisions of the law as applying to their respective lines of business has been continued, and very gratifying results have been shown. Ice dealers have been furnished with copies of the law relating to the sale of ice, and coal dealers have been furnished with copies of the law in poster form for display in their offices where same may be readily consulted. Gasoline venders have also been given instruction regarding the operation of automatic measuring pumps, and other dealers generally have been rendered assistance where it appeared desirable. Educational work of the character indicated can be properly performed only by highly qualified persons. For that reason, among others, it is extremely desirable to maintain an educated and trained staff of inspectors.

QUESTIONABLE METHODS EMPLOYED

Aside from the protection of consumers against fraud, the foundation upon which the District weights and measures law rests is the elimination of sharp practices, questionable methods, and unfair com-

petition in business. Honest business should not be subjected to competition with dishonest business. For that reason every provision of the law should be rigidly enforced, notwithstanding some provisions may appear unimportant to uninformed persons. Rigid regulation redounds as much to the benefit of all businesses which are fairly conducted as to the benefit of the general public. The work of a weights and measures department has become complicated by the fact that old-time methods of cheating have practically disappeared. In their place have sprung up artifices and methods of deception which are extremely crafty. In some instances they are devised by highly trained "experts." They involve great difficulty in discovery and require great diligence to abate. Such practices readily deceive the ordinary purchaser, and they tend to stamp the entire trade in which they are employed with the stigma of dishonesty in the public mind.

Some practices discovered were use of containers which resembled legal standard containers, but which were smaller, reducing the contents of packages without reduction of price; advertising a commodity as of superior quality to another and at a higher price, when the quality was the same; marking packages with net weight and selling same by measure rather than by weight, and thereby deceiving the purchaser. Cases have been found where the method employed was substantially as follows: Price cards, including fractions of cents, were displayed, or prices quoted in such fractions. After the customer had made a selection, the salesman would place the commodity on a scale, remove it quickly, and announce a total price in excess of the proper price for the quantity delivered. Usually the announced total included odd cents. The fractions and odd cents readily confuses the average person, and in case of doubt the purchaser hesitates, by reason of his confusion, to question the correctness of the transaction. An uneducated person is frequently unable to make the calculation at all. Several prosecutions have been instituted against persons employing this method of deception.

NEW TYPES OF INSTRUMENTS

New types of weighing or measuring instruments, many of them of complicated construction, are being almost constantly placed on the market. This is especially true in regard to gasoline pumps. Each new device is subjected to rigid examination as to construction before being approved. It was found necessary to refuse approval of some pumps because of faulty design and construction. In other instances manufacturers were required to make certain changes in the construction of pumps before approval. One element contributing to delivery of short measure of gasoline is the slow drainage of some types of pumps. An extensive survey of this situation, with a view of correction, was made in conjunction with the Bureau of Standards.

Such precaution prevents improper instruments from gaining a foothold in the District. In the large department stores old-time yard sticks have been superseded by intricate machines which measure the goods and calculate the price with one operation. The work of making examinations and tests of new types of instruments requires a high degree of technical training, skill, and keen insight.

It also consumes much time, and it is considered very desirable to see that this work is thoroughly performed.

In view of the fact that with the small inspection force it was impossible to do all the work required by law, it was deemed advisable, in addition to inspection of weighing and measuring instruments, to direct as much attention as possible in the circumstances to sales of certain necessities, such as coal, ice, meats, milk, package foods, gasoline, etc.

PACKAGE FOODS

The wisdom of the law authorizing inspectors to reweigh packages of commodities put up in advance of sale has been thoroughly demonstrated. Inspectors are directed to reweigh such packages whenever found on sale in the course of their regular work of inspection of weighing and measuring instruments. Merchants have come to understand that their package goods may be inspected at any time, and for that reason they are much more careful than formerly to see that they contain full weight and that a statement of quantity is marked on the outside of such packages. It has been necessary in the past to institute some prosecutions for violation of the section of the law in question, but during the past year much improvement in conditions has been manifested, and but few prosecutions were necessary. During the year 13,298 packages were reweighed.

The department has also continued to cooperate with the Federal agencies in enforcement of the law relating to package foods put up by outside manufacturers.

ICE

Considerable improvement has been shown among venders of ice with respect to observance of the law requiring the weight of that commodity to be ascertained at the time of delivery to the purchaser, but the situation is yet far from satisfactory. The ordinary ice vender is prone to guess at the weight he delivers, and it is, of course, impossible to keep all of them under observation at all times. The policy has been to make surveys at as frequent intervals as possible during warm weather, and to let venders understand that detection of violation of the ice law means certain prosecution.

COAL

Deliveries of coal have been reweighed from time to time and general supervision of the business has been as effectively performed as possible. Considerable difficulty has been encountered, however, in obtaining strict compliance with the law relating to the sale of this commodity. Several prosecutions were necessary. It would be desirable to have at least one inspector who could devote his entire time to enforcement of the law relating to the sale of fuel. Many peddlers of coal have continued to exact enormous prices from poor people who buy from them. These peddlers should be under more strict supervision than is possible at present. It would also be beneficial if regular retail dealers having established places of business for the sale of coal would retail small quantities at reasonable prices. Comparatively few of the established coal yards cater to this

class of trade, the result being that the poor must depend upon peddlers who charge excessive prices. Copies of the law relating to sales of coal have continued to be distributed among venders to the end that they may all be informed in regard thereto.

GASOLINE

It is estimated that the consumption of gasoline for motor purposes in the District is over 54,000,000 gallons annually. Most of it is retailed in quantities of 5 gallons or multiple of 5 gallons. An average shortage of only 1 quart on each 5-gallon sale would result in an annual loss to consumers of more than \$400,000. So-called automatic measuring pumps are employed almost exclusively as instruments for measuring quantities of this commodity sold. It is obviously desirable for this department to require accurate tests of these instruments and to exercise close supervision over deliveries by means of test purchases and otherwise. It has been possible to assign only one inspector to the work of testing these pumps in the past, but an additional inspector provided for in the last District appropriation act will be assigned largely to that work during the coming year.

For the purpose of ascertaining whether or not owners of gasoline establishments deal fairly with the public, test purchases are made from time to time by representatives of this department and quantities received carefully verified. Such purchases have been made not only during the regular business hours but frequently at night. Not many large shortages were received, but there appears to continue a considerable tendency to deliver small shortages, often due to carelessness of the operators of the pumps. Some prosecutions were necessary.

The gasoline business appears to be conducted more or less generally in a slipshod, haphazard way. Some concerns engaged in this business appear to employ much unreliable help. The practice of some of the larger concerns operating several filling stations of holding the employees to strict accountability for all gasoline intrusted to them, with no allowance for wastage or shrinkage, apparently tends to cause employees to deliver short measure to the public. The concerns owning the stations appear to give much greater attention to seeing that they themselves are not defrauded than to seeing that the public is not defrauded. This is a situation with which it has been found difficult to deal effectively, but which is obviously in need of correction.

RE-ALLOCATION OF POSITIONS

During the year the Personnel Classification Board of its own volition re-allocated to higher grades and salaries six positions in this department. This action was obviously just and in the public interest. It is never advisable to pay an employee less than a fair salary. A feeling that injustice has been inflicted in that respect readily contributes, in many instances, to disorganization and unrest. Contented employees are valuable to any business or government activity. It is believed that some of the positions re-allocated are yet lower

in grades than the duties justify and that the grades and salaries of other positions should be advanced.

Uninformed persons often underestimate the duties and responsibilities of persons engaged in work of a weights and measures department, and, because of error in that regard, do not realize the importance of maintaining an organization of educated and highly trained individuals. As a matter of fact, persons who are charged with the duty of regulating matters connected with practically all business establishments, and in that capacity are representatives of the District government, should be equipped with a background of education, training, experience, and poise.

DISTRICT MARKETS

Markets owned by the District of Columbia are located as follows:

1. Farmers' Produce Market, Tenth, Twelfth, B, and Little B Streets NW.

2. Fish Market, Eleventh and Water Streets SW.

3. Eastern Market, Seventh and C Streets SE.

4. Western Market, Twenty-first and K Streets NW.

The Farmers' Produce Market is a valuable municipal institution. Farmers, truck growers, fruit growers, poultry raisers, and other producers within a large surrounding territory find it a place where, at small expense, they are able to dispose of their produce readily and to advantage. It has been the means of encouraging production in a large farming territory adjacent to the District. The number of producers selling at the market has tremendously increased during the past several years, and the number of persons who buy at the market has increased from year to year. It also affords retail merchants, hucksters, other small dealers, and consumers an opportunity to buy the best grades of home-grown fruits, vegetables, and other products of the farm directly from the producers thereof at prices far below what they would otherwise have to pay. In other words, the farmers' market as now operated serves the double purpose of saving money to the consumers and making money for the producers. A nominal charge of only 20 cents per day is made for a space wide enough for a vehicle. The total revenue for the past fiscal year was \$13,099.35. No farmer is charged for space except on the days he actually sells produce at the market. The spaces occupied during each of the past 12 fiscal years is as follows:

1916.....	39,474	1922.....	48,178
1917.....	43,803	1923.....	55,675
1918.....	39,299	1924.....	57,245
1919.....	47,910	1925.....	58,734
1920.....	45,441	1926.....	58,318
1921.....	51,035	1927.....	60,923

During the fiscal year covered by this report the numbers of spaces occupied each month were:

July.....	6,513	January.....	2,208
August.....	8,479	February.....	2,023
September.....	8,341	March.....	2,713
October.....	7,555	April.....	3,694
November.....	4,872	May.....	3,785
December.....	4,632	June.....	6,108

The Fish Market and wharves in connection is devoted largely to wholesale and retail sales of sea foods, and a large volume of business is transacted in commodities falling within that classification. There is also unloaded at the wharves considerable quantities of miscellaneous freight. This class of business has been larger during the past year than ever before. An estimate, which is considered conservative, places the business done in sea foods at nearly \$2,000,000, and the value of miscellaneous freight handled over the wharves at more than \$1,000,000. Particular attention has been directed to maintaining good sanitary conditions at this market.

The Eastern and Western Markets are inclosed markets, each having inside stands rented to dealers in various commodities. They are old markets, having been in existence since the early days of Washington. The buildings are in a state of more or less disintegration and do not measure up to modern construction. The equipment is antiquated and methods for handling foods have not kept step with modern progress with respect to sanitation. Markets operated by the District should measure up to a high standard.

Business conditions have changed so much during the past several years that inclosed markets like Eastern and Western do not prosper as formerly. Many people who formerly patronized market dealers now patronize the corner stores. In the case of Western Market, many householders of high-buying power who patronized it in years past have moved to other sections of the city. The result is that business there has decreased. If its operation is continued beyond the current year, very expensive repairs to the building will be necessary and it would be difficult to justify the expense.

The total amount of revenue derived from all District markets during the year was \$42,003.46. All money has been paid over to the collector of taxes for deposit in the Treasury in accordance with the law.

RECOMMENDATIONS

By reason of the vast increase of duties imposed upon the department by the present law over those imposed by the previous law, there is urgent need for additional inspection force. One new inspector was provided for in the last appropriation act. This small increase will be of material benefit, but it is not sufficient, and further increase is recommended.

The previous recommendation for a large truck for transporting equipment necessary to make an adequate test of large scales used for weighing coal and other commodities in heavy loads is respectfully renewed. For reasons which have heretofore been stated at length, the need for such a truck is considered extremely urgent.

It is also recommended that legislation looking to the enactment of what is generally designated as a "fictitious name law" for the District be urged upon Congress in order that the owner and responsible head of any business establishment soliciting public patronage may be readily ascertained. Many such establishments are now operating in the District under so-called trade names or names of persons having no connection with the business. In many instances it is almost impossible to ascertain the name of or identify the responsible head of the business. It is frequently very necessary to have this

information. No one soliciting patronage of the public should be permitted to secrete his identity behind a trade or fictitious name for his establishment. In the case of corporations, they should be required to file a copy of their charters, a list of their officers and directors, and comply with other fair and reasonable regulations before being permitted to operate in the District.

It is further recommended that legislation be sought which will throw greater restrictions around the operations of transient vendors than is now possible. Permission to follow the occupation should be based upon good character and reputation rather than upon the mere ability to pay a license fee. Such restrictions would operate to rid the District of untrustworthy transient vendors who prey upon the public.





